

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1 1. A method comprising:
  - 2 a) accepting search query information including a word;
  - 3 b) determining one or more words related to the word included in the
  - 4 accepted search query;
  - 5 c) generating an item request including
    - 6 i) the word included in the accepted search query, and
    - 7 ii) the one or more words determined to be related to the word
    - 8 included in the accepted search query;
  - 9 d) retrieving items using the item request; and
  - 10 e) applying each of the retrieved items to a performance threshold,
  - 11 wherein the performance of any items retrieved on the basis of the one or
  - 12 more words determined to be related to the word included in the accepted
  - 13 search query is applied to a higher performance threshold than the
  - 14 performance threshold used for any items retrieved on the basis of the
  - 15 word included in the accepted search query.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the act of applying each of the retrieved items
  - 2 to a performance threshold includes adjusting the performance threshold for any
  - 3 items retrieved on the basis of the one or more words determined to be related to
  - 4 the word included in the accepted search query.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the act of adjusting the performance threshold
  - 2 includes multiplying a first performance threshold by a multiplier that is greater
  - 3 than one.
- 1 4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
  - 2 f) updating the multiplier using performance information.
- 1 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the items are ads.

- 1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the performance information includes ad  
2 selection information.
- 1 7. The method of claim 5 wherein the performance information includes ad  
2 conversion information.
- 1 8. A method comprising:  
2 a) accepting search query information;  
3 b) determining relevant items using the search query information and item  
4 targeting information, wherein the act of determining each relevant item  
5 includes associating the items with a confidence measure; and  
6 c) applying each of the relevant items to a performance threshold,  
7 wherein for a given item, the performance threshold is a function of the  
8 confidence measure associated with the determination of relevance of the  
9 item.
- 1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the performance threshold increases as the  
2 confidence measure decreases.
- 1 10. The method of claim 8 wherein the performance threshold decreases as the  
2 confidence measure increases.
- 1 11. The method of claim 9 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 12. The method of claim 10 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 13. The method of claim 9 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

- 1 14. The method of claim 10 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.
- 1 15. The method of claim 8 wherein the act of determining relevant items uses  
2 the search query information, item targeting information, and at least one match  
3 function, and wherein the confidence measure is determined based on the at  
4 least one match function used in the act of determining relevant items.
- 1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the performance threshold increases as the  
2 confidence measure decreases.
- 1 17. The method of claim 15 wherein the performance threshold decreases as  
2 the confidence measure increases.
- 1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 19. The method of claim 17 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 20. The method of claim 16 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.
- 1 21. The method of claim 17 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.
- 1 22. Apparatus comprising:  
2 a) an input for accepting search query information including a word;  
3 b) means for determining one or more words related to the word included  
4 in the accepted search query;  
5 c) means for generating an item request including

- 6 i) the word included in the accepted search query, and
- 7 ii) the one or more words determined to be related to the word
- 8 included in the accepted search query;
- 9 d) means for retrieving items using the item request; and
- 10 e) means for applying each of the retrieved items to a performance
- 11 threshold, wherein the performance of any items retrieved on the basis of
- 12 the one or more words determined to be related to the word included in
- 13 the accepted search query is applied to a higher performance threshold
- 14 than the performance threshold used for any items retrieved on the basis
- 15 of the word included in the accepted search query.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the means for applying each of the  
2 retrieved items to a performance threshold include means for adjusting the  
3 performance threshold for any items retrieved on the basis of the one or more  
4 words determined to be related to the word included in the accepted search  
5 query.

1 24. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the means for adjusting the performance  
2 threshold include means for multiplying a first performance threshold by a  
3 multiplier that is greater than one.

1 25. The apparatus of claim 24 further comprising:

- 2 f) means for updating the multiplier using performance information.

1 26. The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the items are ads.

1 27. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the performance information includes ad  
2 selection information.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the performance information includes ad  
2 conversion information.

- 1 29. Apparatus comprising:
  - 2 a) an input for accepting search query information;
  - 3 b) means for determining relevant items using the search query
  - 4 information and item targeting information and for associating the items
  - 5 with a confidence measure; and
  - 6 c) means for applying each of the relevant items to a performance
  - 7 threshold, wherein for a given item, the performance threshold is a
  - 8 function of the confidence measure associated with the determination of
  - 9 relevance of the item.
- 1 30. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the performance threshold increases as
- 2 the confidence measure decreases.
- 1 31. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the performance threshold decreases as
- 2 the confidence measure increases.
- 1 32. The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
- 2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 33. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
- 2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.
- 1 34. The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
- 2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.
- 1 35. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the
- 2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.
- 1 36. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the means for determining relevant items
- 2 use the search query information, item targeting information, and at least one

3 match function, and wherein the confidence measure is determined based on the  
4 at least one match function used by the means for determining relevant items.

1 37. The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the performance threshold increases as  
2 the confidence measure decreases.

1 38. The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the performance threshold decreases as  
2 the confidence measure increases.

1 39. The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1 40. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad selection rate threshold value.

1 41. The apparatus of claim 37 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.

1 42. The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the item is an ad and wherein the  
2 performance threshold is an ad conversion rate threshold value.